

Message Text

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17

ACTION EA-06

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O R 160930Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9860

AMEMBASSY SAIGON IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 824

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, VN, VS, US

SUBJECT: BRANFMAN VISIT TO NORTH VIETNAM

SUMMARY: FRED BRANFMAN, AMONG OTHERS OF HIS ILK, JUST EMERGED FROM THREE WEEKS IN NORTH VIETNAM. HIS HOSTS CONVINCED HIM OF THEIR SWEET REASONABLENESS AND PACIFIC INTENTIONS. HE IS LIKELY TO BE SINGING THEIR SONG IN WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY.

1. FRED BRANFMAN, CO-DIRECTOR OF THE INDOCHINA RESEARCH CENTER, STOPPED BY THE POLITICAL SECTION JANUARY 15. HE SAID HE HAD JUST SPENT THREE WEEKS IN NORTH VEITNAM WITH DAVID MARR, FRANKIE FITZGERALD, AND AN UNIDENTIFIED FOURTH PERSON.

2. BRANFMAN HAS A SIMPLE SOLUTION TO THE VIETNAM PROBLEM. ALL THE U.S. HAS TO DO IS GET RID OF THIEU, AND FOSTER A GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM THAT WILL PERMIT NORTH VIETNAMESE AND PRG PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN THE SOUTH. THEN THE FIGHTING WILL END.

3. BRANFMAN CONTENDED THAT HIS RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH THE
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NORTH VIETNAMESE REVEALED THAT THEY WERE PRAGMATIC RATHER THAN

IDEOLOGICAL. THEY REALLY WANTED A POLITICAL SOLUTION RATHER THAN A MILITARY ONE. ONLY THIEU'S STUBBORNNESS IN NOT PERMITTING THE FORMATION OF A NATIONAL COUNCIL OF RECONCILIATION AND CONCORD, AS THE PARIS AGREEMENTS PRESCRIBED, FORCES THE NORTH VIETNAMESE TO USE MILITARY TACTICS TO ACHIEVE THEIR POLITICAL OBJECTIVES.

4. WE COUNTERED BY CHALLENGING SEVERAL FALLACIES AND FALSE PREMISES IN BRANFMAN'S ARGUMENTS ON THIS AND OTHER SCORES. HE SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY AMERICAN OFFICIALS LIKE AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE AND WE ALL CONTINUE TO LOOK AT VIETNAM SO NARROWLY. WE SAID WE WERE HAPPY TO BE INCLUDED IN SUCH DISTINGUISHED COMPANY AS AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE.

5. BRANFMAN WAS IMPRESSED BY HANOI AND HIS TWO TRIPS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE. IN CONTRAST TO SAIGON, FEW POLICE WERE IN EVIDENCE, HE SAID. THE SOCIETY WAS HARMONIOUS AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS FULFILLING THE PEOPLE'S NEEDS. THERE WAS NO SIGN THAT ANY MEMBER OF THE POLITBURO HAD PROFITEERED FROM HIS POSITION FOR PERSONAL ENRICHMENT. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE MAY BE PETTY CORRUPTION AT LOWER LEVELS OF THE SOCIETY, BUT THE COUNTRYSIDE WAS UNIVERSALLY AND HAPPILY COLLECTIVIZED. WE ALSO OFFERED SOME VAIN REBUTTALS TO THIS IDYLIC PICTURE.

6. BRANFMAN FURTHER CLAIMED THAT ALL VIETNAMESE THAT THE DELEGATION TALKED TO WERE ANXIOUS TO SEND THEIR SONS OUT OF THE COUNTRY TO PURSUE THE STRUGGLE IN THE SOUTH. HE SAID THE YOUNGER GENERATION THOROUGHLY SUPPORTED THIS POSITION. ANY MODERATING INFLUENCE COMES FROM THE OLDER GENERATION, WHOSE ENTHUSIASM IS APPARENTLY LESS HYSTERICAL.

7. TURNING TO THAILAND, BRANFMAN SAID THE NVA SUPPORTS INSURGENCY HERE ONLY BECAUSE OF THE U.S.-TENANTED AIR BASES. THE NORTH VIETNAMESE STILL FEAR THAT THE U.S. WILL LAUNCH PLANES FROM THESE BASES, ESPECIALLY IF THE NVA TOOK DANANG IN AN OFFENSIVE.

8. BRANFMAN SAID HE INTENDS TO BE ON THE HILL FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, TO CONTINUE LOBBYING AGAINST U.S. SUPPORT TO THIEU. WE DID NOT WISH HIM LUCK.

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